A 7640-6 U 11/83

nea
RESEARCH
MEMO

National Education Association
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20036

Nationwide Teacher Opinion Poll 1983

NEA 439 SA

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

MARY HATWOOD FUTRELL, *President*
KEITH GEIGER, *Vice-President*
ROXANNE E. BRADSHAW, *Secretary-Treasurer*
DON CAMERON, *Executive Director*

NEA RESEARCH

W. Frank Masters, *Director*
Peg J. Jones, *Associate Director* and *Manager, Surveys*

Louise G. Adler
Manager
Research Computer Network

William E. Dresser
Assistant Manager
Graphics

Will S. Myers
Manager
Economics and School Finance

Norma W. Plater
Administrative Manager

Donald P. Walker
Manager
Collective Bargaining and Information Services

Duvon G. Winborne
Manager
Technical Support and Consultation

NATIONWIDE TEACHER OPINION POLL, 1983

Suzanne Gardner
Project Director

Sale Copies: NEA members— Stock No. 3082-6-20
Nonmembers— Stock No. 3082-6-30

Order from the **NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.**

Reproduction: No part of this report may be reproduced in any form without written permission from NEA Research, except by NEA-affiliated associations. Any reproduction of the report materials must include the usual credit line and the copyright notice. Address communications to Editor, NEA Research.

Copyright © 1983 by the
National Education Association
All Rights Reserved

FOREWORD

The Nationwide Teacher Opinion Poll, the 24th in a series of annual surveys, measures the attitudes and opinions of the nation's public school teachers on a variety of current educational and political issues. In addition, the survey provides continuing data on the personal and professional characteristics of the nation's public school teachers. This Research Memo presents data from the 1983 Nationwide Teacher Opinion Poll as well as relevant trend data from previous surveys.

The results from this survey may be used in a variety of educational and political arenas:

- *Demographic information* about public school teachers may be used for informational purposes in describing public school teachers in the United States. In addition, these data may be used to enhance the image of teachers and to support the case for higher teacher salaries (see page 5).
- Responses to questions related to *educational and political* issues (pages 9-15) may be used to report teacher opinions and attitudes on these issues as well as to develop and implement related NEA programs.

Special appreciation is extended to Susan Gewirtz for her assistance with financial data and to Larry Robinson for his research on variables affecting student achievement.

Questions relating to the *Nationwide Teacher Opinion Poll, 1983*, may be directed to NEA Research at (202) 822-7436.

Suzanne Gardner
NEA Research

September 1983

CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION 3

DEMOGRAPHICS 5

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

— The quality of public education 9
— Job satisfaction for teachers 9
— Truancy, discipline and violence 10
— Computers in schools 10
— Censorship 10
— Reduction in force 11
— Standardized testing 11
— Salary supplements, differential salary schedules 11

POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

— PL 94-142 and other federal legislation affecting education 13
— Reduction in government spending/limits on property tax 14
— Importance of candidates' positions on education 14
— Attitudes toward tuition tax credit legislation 15
— Influence of special interest groups 15
— Satisfaction with the job President Reagan is doing 15

NATIONWIDE TEACHER OPINION POLL — 1983

The 1983 Teacher Opinion Poll is the latest in a series of annual surveys designed to assess the opinions of public school teachers on a variety of current issues. The survey was sent to 1,978 of the nation's 2,139,000 public school teachers. With a letter of notification, an initial questionnaire mailing, and four follow-up mailings, 1,596 questionnaires were returned. One hundred six (106) of these questionnaires were not usable for reasons such as inability to locate respondent, respondent no longer teaching, or classification of respondent as other than teacher. Elimination of these 106 unusable questionnaires produced an adjusted sample size of 1,872; usable replies totaled 1,490 for a response rate of 79.6 percent.

Survey participants were selected by means of a two-stage sample design. The first stage involved the selection of a sample of public school systems drawn from a comprehensive file of those systems, classified by pupil enrollment into nine strata. The procedure involved the selection of systems from each stratum, with a probability of selection proportionate to the frequency of occurrence of the various-sized systems. All school systems in the sample received a request for a list of their teachers. With the lists received, systematic sampling with a random start was used. When systems did not provide rosters of teachers, they made available either a random sample or a systematic sample with a random start.

The sample size was selected so that responses would be highly reliable estimates of the opinions and attitudes of all public school teachers. To make inferences about the population from which the sample is drawn, the following procedures should be used:

1. TO ESTIMATE POPULATION PERCENTAGES:

The largest error associated with any sample percentage is 3 percent at the 90-percent confidence level. For example, if a sample percentage is 60 percent, there is a 90-percent chance that the population percentage lies between 57 and 63 percent (60 percent ± 3 percent).

2. TO ESTIMATE POPULATION MEANS

For the 90-percent confidence interval, multiply the standard error displayed with the means by 1.645. This error is then added to and subtracted from the sample mean to obtain a range for the population mean. For example, the standard error for annual contract salary in these data is $1,101. This number is multiplied by 1.645 to obtain $1,811. When $1,811 is added to and subtracted from the mean annual contract salary of $20,673, we find that there is a 90-percent chance that the true mean salary in the population is between $18,862 and $22,484.

The results contained in this report are grouped in three areas:

- DEMOGRAPHICS
- EDUCATIONAL ISSUES
  - The quality of public education
  - Job satisfaction for teachers
  - Truancy, discipline and violence
  - Computers in schools
  - Censorship
  - Reduction in force
  - Standardized testing
  - Salary supplements, differential salary schedules
- POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES
  - PL 94-142 and other federal legislation affecting education
  - Reduction in government spending/limits on property tax
  - Importance of candidates' positions on education
  - Attitudes toward tuition tax credit legislation
  - Influence of special interest groups
  - Satisfaction with the job President Reagan is doing

Each of the three areas above includes responses from the total group; responses from the following demographic subgroups are available upon request from NEA Research: Geographic region, type of community, school enrollment, teaching level, highest degree held, length of teaching experience, race, gender, political affiliation, and NEA membership.

The states comprising each region are as follows:

Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont.

Southeast: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia.

Middle: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.

West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

DEMOGRAPHICS – SELECTED DATA

FIGURE 1
PERCENT OF ALL TEACHERS HOLDING GRADUATE DEGREES, 1963-1983

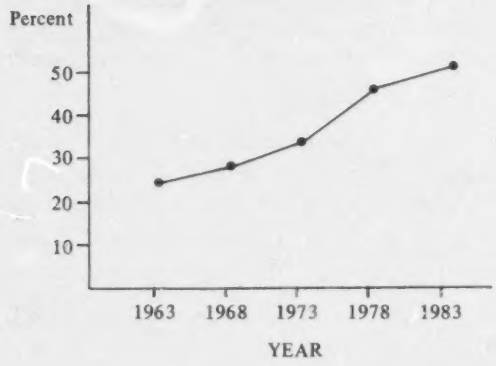
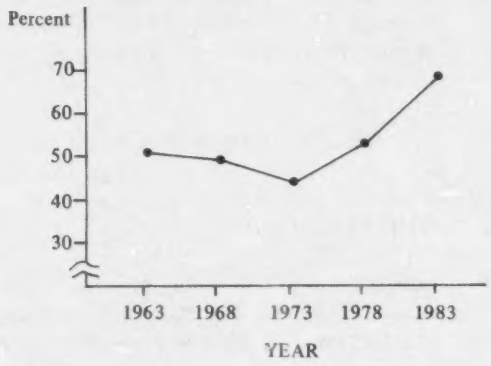


FIGURE 2
PERCENT OF ALL TEACHERS HAVING TEN YEARS OR MORE TEACHING EXPERIENCE, 1963-1983



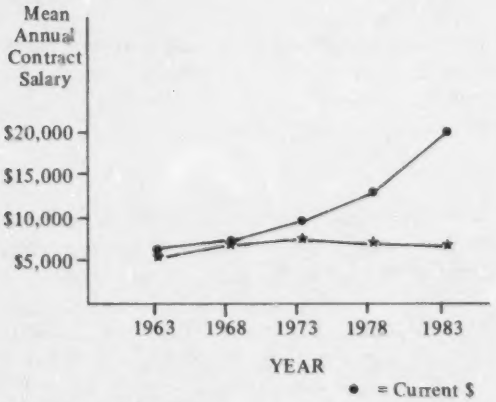
The percent of all teachers holding *graduate degrees* has increased from 25 percent in 1963 to 52 percent in 1983. The percent of all teachers having *ten years or more teaching experience* showed a slight decline between 1963 and 1973 (from 51 to 44 percent) but in 1983 the percent of teachers having ten years or more teaching experience is at an all time high of 69 percent.

Research has consistently shown that teacher training and experience are positively related to student achievement.* In addition, training and experience are the *only* two teacher characteristics rewarded on the single salary schedule which is currently the compensation system used in virtually every school district in the United States.

The evidence in figures 1 and 2 indicates that the current teaching force is the most experienced and best qualified in history.

*Citations available upon request.

FIGURE 3
TEACHER SALARIES, 1963-1983. CURRENT DOLLARS COMPARED WITH CONSTANT DOLLARS.*



*Indexed to 1967 CPI-U.

Although teacher salaries have shown a current dollar increase over the past twenty years, constant (or "inflation-free") dollars have shown little change between 1963 and 1983; in fact, *teacher salaries in constant dollars are lower in 1983 than in 1968.*

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The geographic distribution of the respondents is as follows: Northeast, 19 percent; Southeast, 25 percent; Middle, 29 percent; and West, 27 percent.

- The majority of respondents (61 percent) are from school systems with less than 12,000 students. Eight percent of the respondents are from school systems with 100,000 pupils or more. The remaining 31 percent of the respondents are from school systems with from 12,000 to less than 100,000 pupils.

- Approximately 80 percent classify themselves as regular classroom teachers, 7 percent are special education teachers, 3 percent are Chapter I (formerly Title I) teachers, and the remaining 10 percent classify themselves in some other way, such as librarians or resource teachers.

- Nearly half (47 percent) are employed at the elementary level, 10 percent are middle school teachers, 11 percent are teaching in junior high schools, 30 percent are senior high teachers, with 2 percent at more than one level.

- More than one-half (52 percent) teach in departmentalized situations, 29 percent have self-contained classrooms, 7 percent are in team-teaching situations, 4 percent are kindergarten or pre-kindergarten teachers (approximately one-half of these teachers have one class per day and the other half have 2 classes per day), and the remaining 8 percent have some other arrangement.

- In the departmentalized situations, more teach English and language arts (21 percent) than any other subject. Other subjects taught by a significant number are mathematics (19 percent), science (12 percent), social studies (12 percent), and health and physical education (9 percent).

- The mean faculty size reported is 26 teachers in elementary schools, 43 teachers in middle/junior high schools, and 69 teachers in senior high schools.

- The mean number of students enrolled in the respondents' schools is 495 in elementary schools, 792 in middle/junior high schools, and 1,212 in senior high schools.

- More than one-half of all teachers have either a master's degree (47 percent) or a degree based on 6 years of college study (5 percent). Slightly less than one-half (48 percent) report a bachelor's degree as their highest earned degree. Less than 1 percent report holding a doctorate degree.

- Two-thirds of all respondents have from 5 to 19 years of teaching experience. About eight percent have fewer than 5 years experience, while 26 percent have 20 years or more. The mean years of teaching experience for all teachers is 15 years and the median is 13 years. The mean and median number of years in present school systems are 12 and 11, respectively (standard error = 1 year).

- Forty-five percent of all respondents teach in either a small town (31 percent) or rural area (14 percent), 31 percent teach in a suburban community, 11 percent teach in the inner core of a city, and 12 percent teach in some other part of the city.

- Fifteen percent of the respondents report that they hold no memberships in national teachers' organizations. Of the 85 percent who are members of *one or more* teachers' organizations, 79 percent belong to the National Education Association, 8 percent belong to the American Federation of Teachers, and 4 percent belong to some other organization.

- The current MEAN ANNUAL CONTRACT SALARY for all teachers is $20,673 (standard error = $1,101). THE MEAN ANNUAL CONTRACT SALARIES for subgroups are as follows: $20,205 for elementary teachers, $20,606 for middle/junior high teachers, $21,354 for senior high teachers, $22,164 for males, $19,918 for females, $22,427 in the Northeast, $17,474 in the Southeast, $21,145 in the Middle states, $21,835 in the Western states, $22,023 in city areas, $23,875 in suburban areas, and $18,549 in small town/rural areas.

- The current MEAN TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME (including the income of spouses for married respondents) is $36,773 (standard error = $2,810); 37 percent of the teachers report combined family incomes of less than $30,000 and 17 percent report $50,000 or more.

- Two-thirds (67 percent) of all teachers are female, whose mean age is 40 years; 33 percent are male, whose mean age is 41 years (standard error = 1 year).

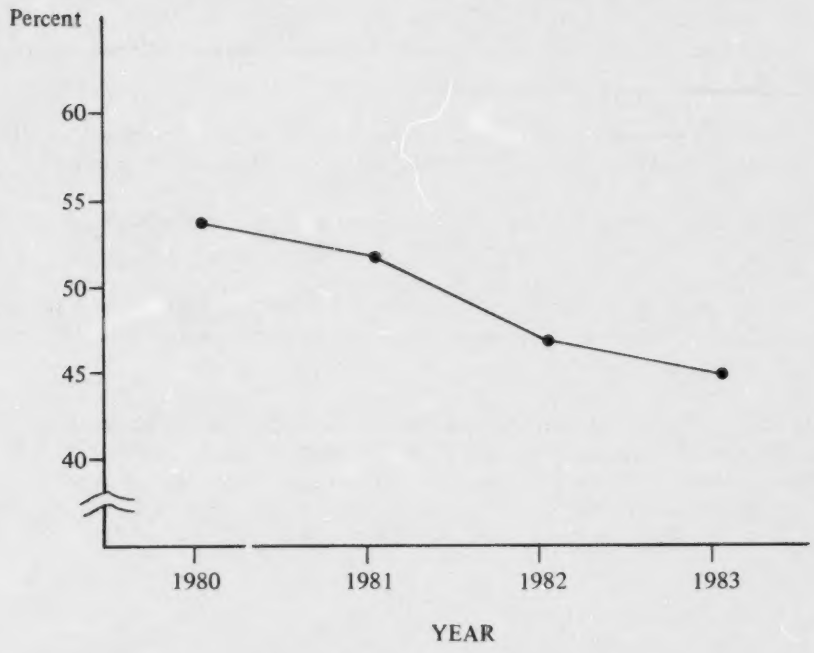
- More than three-fourths (77 percent) of all teachers are presently married. Of those not married, 10 percent have been previously married.

- The racial/ethnic composition of all teachers is 88 percent Caucasian, 8 percent Black, 2 percent Chicano-Hispano, 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander.

- Thirty-one percent of all teachers do not consider themselves to be affiliated with any political party. Two-thirds (68 percent) of the respondents classify themselves either as a Democrat (42 percent) or a Republican (28 percent). Less than 1 percent are affiliated with another political party.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES – SELECTED DATA

FIGURE 4
PERCENT OF ALL TEACHERS REPORTING THAT STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR INTERFERES A "GREAT" OR "MODERATE EXTENT" WITH THEIR TEACHING, 1980-1983.



The percent of all teachers reporting that student misbehavior interferes a "great" or "moderate extent" with their teaching has *decreased 9 percentage points in the past three years,* from 54 percent in 1980 to 45 percent in 1983.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

- When asked to rate the *quality of public education* provided by their schools and school districts, 88 percent rated their school as "very good" or "good," and 82 percent rated their school district as "very good" or "good."

- The following may be considered to be measures of *job satisfaction* among teachers:

  — More than one-half of all respondents (58 percent) either certainly would (24 percent) or probably would (34 percent) become a teacher again if they could go back to their college days. Nearly one-third (30 percent) probably would not become a teacher again, and 13 percent certainly would not become a teacher again.

  — More than one-half of all teachers (51 percent) plan to remain in teaching either until required to retire (12 percent) or until eligible for retirement (39 percent). Another quarter (24 percent) will probably continue teaching unless something better comes along. Nine percent definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as they can, and 16 percent are undecided.

  — Teachers were asked to rate various phrases that describe specific aspects of teaching. A scale of 1 to 10 was used with 6 to 10 indicating satisfaction and 1 to 5 indicating dissatisfaction.

  A majority of respondents rated the following aspects of teaching in the 6 to 10 range, indicating relative satisfaction in these areas:

  - The flexibility you have in deciding how to teach ..... 88 percent
  - The personal fulfillment you get from teaching ..... 83 percent
  - The support you receive from other teachers in your school ..... 80 percent
  - The availability of up-to-date textbooks ..... 75 percent
  - The support you receive from your principal ..... 74 percent
  - The support available to you from teachers' organizations ..... 71 percent
  - The time you spend supervising students outside of class ..... 68 percent
  - The availability of teaching supplies ..... 66 percent
  - Student behavior in your class(es) ..... 66 percent
  - The number of students in your class or classes ..... 65 percent
  - The support you receive from the parents of your students ..... 61 percent
  - The procedures used for handling student misbehavior in your school ..... 55 percent
  - The fringe benefits you receive ..... 55 percent
  - The time you spend on school work after working hours ..... 50 percent

  A majority of respondents rated the following aspects of teaching in the 1 to 5 range, indicating relative dissatisfaction in these areas:

  - The amount of time you spend on record keeping and clerical duties .. 66 percent
  - The salary you receive ..... 61 percent
  - The treatment of education by the media in your community ..... 61 percent
  - The amount of clerical help available to you from teacher aides or other support staff ..... 60 percent
  - The quality of the in-service education provided by your school system ..... 52 percent

- Nearly one-half of all respondents (45 percent) report that *student misbehavior* interferes with their teaching to either a "great" (15 percent) or "moderate" (30 percent) extent. Another 46 percent report that student misbehavior interferes to a "small" extent with their teaching; 9 percent report no interference from student misbehavior.

- Nearly three-fourths (71 percent) report that their school districts have a written policy on *student truancy*. When these teachers rated the effectiveness of this policy, 13 percent say that the policy is "very effective," 52 percent rate it "somewhat effective," 22 percent say that it is "somewhat ineffective," and 13 percent rate it "very ineffective."

- More than one-fourth (28 percent) of all respondents say that their *personal property has been stolen and/or intentionally damaged* by a student within the previous 12 months.

- Four percent of the teachers surveyed report having been *physically attacked* by a student within the previous 12 months. The majority of these incidents were described as intentional, involving one or two students, and having taken place either in the teacher's classroom, in the school building, or on school grounds.
  Slightly more than one-half of the teachers involved in these physical attacks report receiving either minor physical injury or emotional trauma as a result. Slightly less than one-half report that they received neither a physical injury nor emotional trauma.

- Seventy percent of all teachers report that *computers* or *computer terminals* are available in their school building for student use; 44 percent of the teachers having computers or terminals available report that from 50 to 100 percent of their students have access to them. Students who have access to the computers or terminals average two and one-half (2 1/2) hours per week of terminal time.

  The majority of student uses for the computers or terminals is described as:

  — Learning to use computer software packages
  — Computer-assisted instruction in subject areas
  — Learning to write computer programs

- Ninety percent of all teachers surveyed report that they have not personally faced any attempts at *censorship* in their jobs during the last two years. The remaining 10 percent of the respondents are evenly divided (5 percent each) between those who report successful attempts and those who felt serious threats but unsuccessful attempts.

- Of the teachers surveyed, 6 percent were informed by their school boards last year (1981-82) that they *might not be employed* in the 1982-83 school year. With the exception of three (3) respondents who are now employed in other school systems, all respondents were reemployed in the same or another position. By the nature of the sampling methodology of this survey, however, teachers who were not reemployed in the 1982-83 school year would not have been available as respondents to the survey. Thus, to conclude that all teachers who received "layoff" notices in 1981-82 were able to find employment in the teaching profession would be an erroneous conclusion.

- Seventy-eight percent of all respondents report that their performance as a teacher was formally evaluated during 1982-83. Of those who were evaluated, ninety percent said that their *students' standardized test scores* were not one of the criteria used in the evaluation; 2 percent said that students' standardized test scores were used to evaluate their performance, and 8 percent were not sure.

Teachers were asked to rate the appropriateness of a variety of *uses for standardized tests.*

— A MAJORITY of teachers responded that the following uses of standardized tests are APPROPRIATE:

- Diagnosing individual student learning problems ..... 77 percent
- The basis for grouping or tracking students ..... 69 percent
- To determine entry into the teaching profession ..... 51 percent
- The primary basis for determining college admission ..... 50 percent

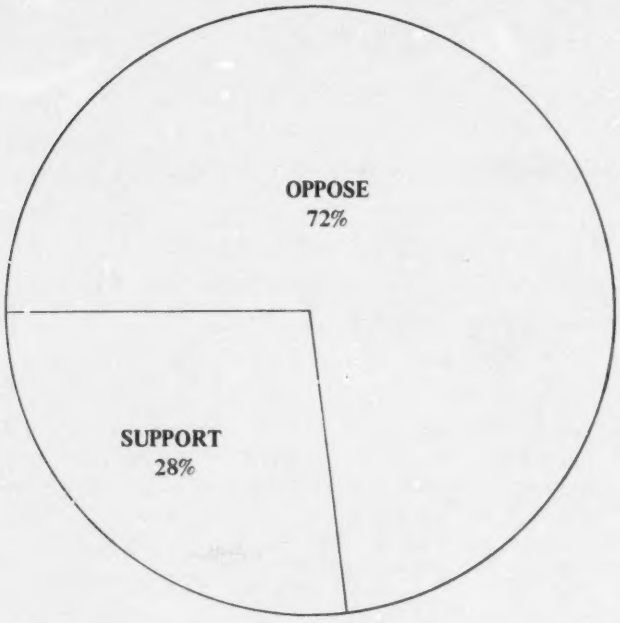
— On the other hand, a MAJORITY of teachers rate the following uses of standardized tests as INAPPROPRIATE:

- Using student test data to evaluate individual teacher effectiveness ..... 79 percent
- To grant teacher recertification ..... 65 percent
- The primary measure of student learning ..... 60 percent
- Using student test data to evaluate the effectiveness of schools ..... 58 percent
- To determine promotion/retention of students ..... 58 percent
- The primary basis for granting a high school diploma ..... 57 percent

- Several specific state or local efforts to maintain and expand a competent teaching force are supported by a majority of teachers. Specifically, 55 percent of the respondents support *salary supplements* to reward outstanding teachers, 46 percent support stipends to teachers in "critical shortage" areas such as science and mathematics, and 83 percent support differential salary schedules for teachers based on career stages such as beginning, professional, and master.

POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES – SELECTED DATA

FIGURE 5
TEACHER SUPPORT FOR TUITION TAX CREDIT LEGISLATION, 1983.



In 1983, 72 percent of all teachers OPPOSE legislation to provide tuition tax credits to parents having children in nonpublic elementary or secondary schools; 28 percent of all teachers FAVOR such legislation. Respondents to the survey believe that the strongest statements that could be used to encourage voters to OPPOSE tuition tax credit legislation are that these tax credits would:

- Benefit primarily the affluent taxpayer
- Be funded through federal funds formerly allocated for public education

POLITICAL AND LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

- More than one-fourth of all teachers report having been required to *perform nonteaching duties* during the 1982-83 school year in order to comply with PL 94-142 and other federal legislation such as the School Lunch Program, Title I (Chapter I), Title IX, the Civil Rights Act, Impact Aid, Migrant Education, Vocational Education, or Bilingual Education.

  For PL 94-142, respondents were requested to indicate, from a list, which activities they had performed and to estimate the number of hours per month devoted to each activity. This information is presented below:

Activity	Percent of all respondents performing the duty 1982-83	Average hours per month—mean*
Developing IEPs (Individualized Education Programs).....	15%	5.1 hrs
Attending IEP team meetings	19	3.0
Instructional planning for handicapped students	15	9.7
Revising or updating IEPs	13	4.6
Other.....	5	7.8

Activities performed in order to comply with other federal legislation are listed below, with percent of all respondents performing the duty and total hours devoted to each duty during the 1982-83 school year:

Activity	Percent of all respondents performing the duty 1982-83	Average hours per month—mean*
Distribution and collection of forms	23%	8.1 hrs
Keeping records	19	19.2
Other.....	5	25.8

*The basis for calculating the mean is the total number of teachers performing the duty.

- Respondents were asked whether voters in the community where they teach would support legislation to reduce *government spending and/or limit local property tax increases.* From 12 to 16 percent responded that at least one of the actions had already taken place, approximately 60 percent responded that voters in their communities would probably support such actions, from 8 to 15 percent said that voters would probably not support such actions, and approximately 15 percent were not able to assess community reactions to such legislation.

- Respondents were asked to rate the importance of *political candidates' positions on public education* in their personal decision to vote for them. At the LOCAL level, 35 percent of the respondents feel that a candidate's positions on public education are MORE important than positions on other issues (54 percent say they are AS important). At the STATE level, 31 percent feel that a candidate's positions on public education are MORE important than positions on other issues (61 percent say they are AS important). At the NATIONAL level, 11 percent feel that a candidate's positions on public education are MORE important than positions on other issues (70 percent say they are AS important).

- Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of all respondents OPPOSE proposed legislation to provide *tuition tax credits* to parents having children in nonpublic elementary or secondary schools.

  Regardless of whether respondents support or oppose tuition tax credit legislation, they were asked to rate the relative strength of six statements in encouraging voters in their communities to OPPOSE tuition tax credit legislation. The statements are listed below with the percentage of respondents giving the statement a relative STRONG rating (6 to 10).

  — Benefit primarily the affluent taxpayer ..... 72 percent
  — Be funded through federal funds formerly allocated for public education.. 71 percent
  — Provide federal support to institutions, some of which practice discrimination based on race, sex, physical handicaps, etc. ..... 61 percent
  — Encourage the middle class to abandon public schools ..... 60 percent
  — Lead to government regulation of nonpublic education..... 58 percent
  — Violate the constitutional principle of separation of church and state..... 56 percent

  Similarly, regardless of whether respondents support or oppose tuition tax credit legislation, they were asked to rate the relative strength of six statements in encouraging voters in their communities to SUPPORT tuition tax credit legislation. The statements are listed below with the percentage of respondents giving the statement a relatively STRONG rating (6 to 10):

  — Ease the "double charge" for tax-paying parents whose children are enrolled in nonpublic schools..... 68 percent
  — Extend the choice of nonpublic education to parents who otherwise could not afford it ..... 66 percent
  — Extend the choice of nonpublic education to a larger number of students with special needs ..... 53 percent
  — Support the growth of nonpublic schools whose emphasis is quality education..... 52 percent
  — Strengthen public education through greater competition with nonpublic schools ..... 43 percent
  — Extend assistance to nonpublic schools which they deserve for providing a public service..... 37 percent

- Respondents were asked to estimate the *influence that specific special interest groups have on governmental policies established at the national level.* A list of these special interest groups is provided below, with the percentage of respondents rating each as having either "great" or "moderate influence":

  — The AFL-CIO ..... 77 percent
  — The National Education Association ..... 53 percent
  — The National Rifle Association ..... 51 percent
  — The Business and Industry Political Action Committee ..... 46 percent
  — The National Association of Manufacturers ..... 42 percent
  — The Moral Majority ..... 40 percent
  — The National Right-to-Life Committee ..... 38 percent
  — The National Organization for Women ..... 34 percent
  — The Chamber of Commerce ..... 33 percent
  — The American Federation of Teachers ..... 28 percent
  — The National Right-to-Work Committee ..... 21 percent

- Respondents were asked to *rate the job President Reagan is doing* in a variety of areas. These areas are listed below with the percent of respondents giving ratings of "very good" or "good" ("poor" and "very poor" ratings are also listed).

	Very good/ Good	Poor/ Very poor
— Education	23%	77%
— Unemployment	25	75
— Environmental issues	32	68
— Social services	35	65
— Human rights	44	56
— Energy	46	54
— Foreign affairs	50	50
— Inflation	59	41
— National defense	67	33

When members of the National Education Association were asked the same question on a similar poll in 1982, ratings in all areas were quite similar to the above results with the exception of "Inflation." In 1982, 38 percent of the NEA members gave President Reagan a "very good" or "good" rating compared with 59 percent in 1983. The majority of teachers continue to give President Reagan a poor rating in most areas, their greatest dissatisfaction being in the areas of "Education," "Unemployment," and Environmental issues."